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# THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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LEILA MECHLIN, Editor

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### THE EDITOR,

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## PUBLIC TASTE

In a brief address made at the American Institute of Architects' annual dinner in Washington, in December, Mr. Jesse Benedict Carter, director of the American Academy in Rome, said that taste was the most personal of possessions, and that any effort to educate the public taste which did not take this fact into consideration would result in mere standardization. He said that our tendency in this country was to consider all subjects from the standpoint of the mass, to think in great numbers, and so to lose sight of the individual. So common is this tendency he intimated, that when perchance the individual is recognized it is a surprise and brings immediate response. He called attention also to the contribution which in many instances the poor foreigner brings to our land in inherent appreciation of art and a taste already cultivated.

Mr. Carter has lived many years in a land rich in art and its traditions—where the temperament is instinctively artistic. He

speaks furthermore as one who has for long studied the problems of education in its various phases. His speech at the dinner of the American Institute of Architects was not gravely made, but it touched upon fundamental truths. In the first place, taste can only be cultivated by individual contact. A love of beauty may be inherent, but discrimination can only come through knowledge. The best possible way to educate the public taste therefore is to give the public opportunity to see fine things and to hold such things in high regard. It is not enough to have fine pictures in our museums; we must have fine buildings on our streets, fine monuments, parks, bridges and the like. Those who have good taste and have the advantages of knowledge must serve as leaders, not dictators, to the bystanders, and thus gradually the public taste will be improved, representing the cultivated taste of numerous individuals.

Art as art is of very little significance in the summing up of life, but art which gives more beauty to the world opens blind eyes, sows seeds of content, engenders high ideals; in short, makes life very worth living is an invaluable asset to both the individual and the nation.

And art is above all things, both in its creation and appreciation, individual. The created work lacking this note falls short. The message in every instance is from man to man. Let us get away then as far as we can from formulas and averages and consider more carefully the individual, remembering that there is a basis of common kinship and that the public is after all only an aggregation of units.

It may also be added that it is our conviction that public taste as a rule is rather better on the whole than private taste. If left to form their own judgment the common people even in this supposedly inartistic land are pretty apt to reach a correct estimate—or at least to select the best. Our bad monuments, poorly designed buildings and the like, have been chosen for us, not by popular vote, but by committees composed of citizens possessing that small amount of learning which is proverbially regarded as dangerous. Indeed most of the mistakes in judgment and selection indicative of poor taste on the

part of the public would seem to have come not through instinctive error on the part of individuals but rather from overcredulity, confidence misplaced, and judgment misled. It is for this reason that the great need is the multiplication of real works of art, works possessing beauty in thought, feeling and workmanship, in order that a first-hand knowledge may be obtained and individual judgment formed through constant contact and familiarity.

### FREDERICK B. MCGUIRE

Frederick B. McGuire, director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art since 1900, died at his home, in Washington, D. C., in December. Mr. McGuire was elected a trustee of the Gallery in 1882, while his father, one of the charter members, was still a member of the Board. In 1894 he was chosen secretary of the Board and in 1900 became the first director of the Gallery. As the intimate personal friend of Mr. Corcoran, the founder of the Gallery, Mr. McGuire had been directly or indirectly connected with the Institution practically from its foundation. Under his direction its activities and scope were greatly increased and upon his advice some of its most notable acquisitions were made. In compliance with his wish, and most appropriately, the funeral services were held in the main hall of the Corcoran Gallery with which he had been so long connected, loved so well and served so faithfully.

### NOTES

ART IN  
OKLAHOMA

About 6,000 persons visited an exhibition of American paintings sent out by The American Federation of Arts which was shown in the University of Oklahoma at Norman in December. This is a surprisingly good record for a town of about 5,000 population. The fact is, however, that the people came from all over the state, the exhibition being splendidly advertised by means of handbills and window cards, and the railroads giving special fares to those who desired to see the paintings.

Visitors were given opportunity of voting for their favorite picture. As Oklahoma was the old Indian Territory it is interesting

to find that Irving Couse's Indian picture entitled "Making Pottery," was the one which received the highest number of votes. Birge Harrison's "Snow Landscape" came second on the list. Hayley Lever's painting, "Dancing Boats," created much interest and discussion.

The University of Oklahoma is sending out to schools throughout the state a collection of splendid colored prints of old masterpieces. The first set of 100 has just started on a circuit, making one-week stands at each place. Oklahoma is waking up. The schools throughout the state are seeking to take on efficient teachers of art, and progress is being made in many directions. Much credit is due to Mr. Oscar B. Jacobson who is at the head of the Department of Art in the University of Oklahoma. During January the First Annual Exhibition of the work of artists of Oklahoma will be held at the University.

### THE NEWPORT ART ASSOCIATION

The Newport Art Association has purchased the Griswold estate on Bellevue Avenue, Newport, for a permanent home, and will take possession in February. This estate has ideal location in the center of the residential part of the city opposite the old mill, near the church and the statue of Channing, and almost next door to the Redwood Library. Furthermore, the purchase saves this charming estate and preserves it for all time.

The Newport Art Association is not yet four years old, but it is a vigorous and active organization. It has held a series of important and successful exhibitions; under its auspices numerous instructive lectures have been given by distinguished speakers; it conducts Saturday classes in drawing for children and provides instruction for others who are striving to make art a profession. In short, it is said to be a part of "the new Newport movement which strives to promote the city's growth in every direction—socially, spiritually and materially."

Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott is its Secretary and the leading spirit in its upbuilding.

### A CHILDREN'S ART MUSEUM

In a recent issue of the *Outlook* the following very interesting account was given of a plan proposed by FitzRoy